

General Assembly – 70th session: Third Committee

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, 22nd October 2015

Irish statement

Thank you Chair.

Ireland thanks the Special Rapporteur for his presentation here today and for his very active engagement since his appointment last year. Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered/to be delivered by the EU.

Ireland has long been an advocate of human rights defenders, including throughout our current membership of the Human Rights Council. We strongly support the central role played by human rights defenders in ensuring the enjoyment of human rights by all and we condemn all acts of violence and intimidation against them. We are deeply concerned about increasing restrictions on their actions in some states. These concerns encompass restrictions on freedom of peaceful assembly, association, opinion and expression, the impact of counter-terrorism instruments on the work of human rights defenders, and issues around their access to funding, including from abroad. We are particularly disturbed by increasing reports of reprisals aimed at discouraging human rights defenders from interacting with international human rights protection mechanisms.

We support the Special Rapporteur's calls for states to publicly affirm the value of the activities of human rights defenders and publicly denounce those who in various ways seek to question the legitimacy of their work, including by stigmatising them. We agree with the Special Rapporteur that the effective enforcement of judgements against perpetrators of abuses against human rights defenders is key to combating impunity along with prompt, effective and impartial investigations and court proceedings to bring the perpetrators to justice. We would like to ask how can States best be held accountable for meeting their obligation on this and other issues relating to the protection and empowerment of human rights defenders?

Finally, we would be keen to hear your views on the need for protection of persons who, in the public interest, disclose evidence of human rights abuses or violations, so-called whistleblowers. How can we best address the risks they face?

Thank you.